



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

January 27, 2014

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Sensenbrenner:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) activities in the area of motorcycle safety, including the Motorcycle Safety Guide (the Guide) we released last year.

Motor vehicle crashes, including motorcycle crashes, are the leading cause of death in the first three decades of life; nearly 100 people die every day on our roads. Because of the impact motor vehicle crashes have on Americans' health, CDC is uniquely positioned as the nation's public health protection agency to ensure that the most current science is available to keep people healthy and safe on our roads. We collaborate closely with our federal transportation partners to fill a gap in understanding the issue of motor vehicle safety from a public health perspective.

Motorcycle ownership is at an all-time high and motorcycle-related deaths have increased by 55% since 2000. Because of this, motorcycle-related deaths and injuries are expected to remain at high levels unless more effective protective measures are adopted.

According to the Guide, 41% of motorcycle operators and 50% of motorcycle passengers who died in 2010 were not wearing a helmet. Studies have shown that unhelmeted riders are 50% more likely to die from a head injury than someone wearing a helmet. Even when non-fatal, head injuries can mean a lifetime of costly rehabilitation and severe emotional trauma for family and friends. In fact, treating severe traumatic brain injuries costs 13 times more than non-brain injuries. Helmets reduce the risk of non-fatal head injuries by 69%.

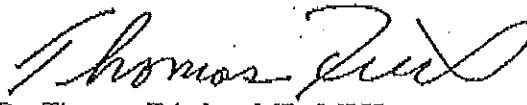
CDC approaches motorcycle safety in the same manner as other public health issues, such as heart disease, cancer and asthma. We define the problem, identify the risk factors, and assess prevention strategies. We then partner with key players in the Federal government such as the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to advance evidence-based strategies to protect people from disease, injury and death.

CDC, DOT, and NTSB are key players in the Federal government's efforts to protect lives on America's roads. Although we are working toward the same goal—reduce death and injury related to motor vehicle crashes—we are distinct agencies that bring different strengths to the field. Specifically, DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is the federal government's leader in traffic safety policy and enforcement, NTSB is the federal agency lead in traffic accident investigation and safety recommendations, and CDC provides expertise in

developing practical programs based on the latest science. CDC recognizes that working with DOT's NHTSA and NTSB is both efficient and necessary to reduce death and injury related to motor vehicle crashes. One example of our partnership with NHTSA is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that maximizes federal resources and unifies efforts through a framework for collaboration in transportation safety. As a component of the MOU, CDC and NHTSA are co-funding a project to determine the core elements of an effective ignition interlock system; a joint effort to help keep our roads safe.

CDC's close relationship with partner agencies ensures that our work is complementary and non-duplicative. If you have additional questions, we are happy to provide you with further information. Thank you again for your letter and for your concern about this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Thomas Frieden".

Dr. Thomas Frieden, MD, MPH
Director, CDC